

IMPERIAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MEDICINE

Minutes of Council Meeting

Held at The Stadium, Scale Space on 27 February 2026, at 09.00

Present

Mr. V. Banga (Chair), Professor D. Ashby, Ms. A. Ashley-Smith, Professor Sir L. Borysiewicz, Professor H. Brady (President), Professor N. Brandon, Ms. K. Briggs, Ms. K. Coates, Professor R. Craster, Dr L. Elvidge, Professor Dame L. Gladden, Professor P. Haynes (Provost and Deputy President), Mr. A. Hennah, Mr. N. Henry, Sir R. Kalifa, Mr. R. Kerse, Mr. D. Khanna, Professor L. Lightstone, Ms. A. MacIntosh-LaRocque, Dr M. Meaney Haynes, Mr. T. Olanrewaju, Mr. S. Saxena, Mr. J. Seppala, Ms. A. Spring, Professor P. Todd, and Mr. R. Martin (Registrar and University Secretary).

In attendance

Vice-President (Communications and Strategic Engagement), Interim Vice-Provost (Education and Student Experience (Minutes 1 - 8), Chief Financial Officer (from Minute 11), and Director of University Governance.

Welcome

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Professor Alan Spivey, interim Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience), who would lead the first discussion item. Apologies for absence were received from Mr. Jamie Ritblat.
2. He apologised for the late change to the schedule and noted that the Strategy Implementation update, originally planned for the informal strategy discussions, would now take place as part of the formal Council meeting. He added that colleagues from the University Management Board and the external committee members would join Council for lunch and for the afternoon discussions on the fundraising campaign.

Minutes and matters arising

3. The Minutes from the meeting held on 28 November 2025 were approved and the action tracker noted.
4. The Chair reported two Chair's actions. Firstly, further to Council's approval of the five-year financial forecast in November, the revised forecast reflecting updates to the international student tuition fee levy had been approved by Chair's action, in consultation with the Chair of the Finance Committee, on 31 December 2025. Secondly, the Chair confirmed that the Chair's action reported at the September meeting to approve the leases for 10–15 Prince's Gardens and 58 Prince's Gate to Cognita was now complete, with all conditions met and two substantive changes agreed during final negotiations in consultation with the Chair of the

Property Committee.

Conflicts of interest with agenda items

5. No conflicts of interest were raised.

Evolution of teaching and learning in response to Generative AI

6. The Interim Vice-Provost (Education and Student Experience) presented the paper which outlined how Imperial was embracing the opportunities and managing the risks arising from the rapid development of generative AI and its impact on the teaching and learning environment (Paper 4). He emphasised the potential benefits for personalising learning, the growing importance of AI skills in the workplace, and the principle of using AI “to think with you, not for you,” and invited Council’s views to inform the next stage of work. His presentation included the following:
 - a. Given that most assessment at Imperial continued to be on-campus examinations, the greater potential for students to use AI arose in coursework, and this aligned with a wider programme to streamline assessment in response to NSS feedback, including the removal of some assessments where learning outcomes were already demonstrated elsewhere. Academic experts were reviewing coursework to ensure it remained pedagogically robust in a GenAI context and to identify suitable alternative formats, including new approaches such as hackathons.
 - b. To avoid a reactive approach, work was underway to strengthen AI literacy through foundational materials on machine-learning concepts and the appointment of 0.4 FTE AI Futurists in each faculty and one centrally to support longer-term curriculum development. Student-facing resources were also being produced, including short online introductions to GenAI, although discipline-specific guidance remained challenging given the varied impacts of GenAI across fields.
 - c. Principles had been developed to enable departments and course leaders to set context-specific guidance on the use of AI and to translate this into appropriate expectations for their programmes. In parallel, work to ensure equitable access to large language models (LLMs) had led to the launch of the dAIsy portal, providing staff and students with secure access to a suite of LLMs and tools that allowed parallel queries to compare outputs across models.
 - d. Departments and course leaders were considering the implications of generative AI, particularly for how students progressed from first-year novice to disciplinary expert. Whereas early study had traditionally developed through foundational cognitive steps, LLMs now enabled students to bypass many of these stages, prompting a re-examination of the student learning pathway.

- e. The emerging vision was shared, setting out the institutional landscape needed to pivot Imperial's education to where it needed to be. Work was underway to build shared understanding of when and why access to LLMs would be permitted or restricted, with the overarching ambition that students develop deep disciplinary knowledge while using AI ethically and responsibly.
7. The main points in discussion were that:
- a. The debate around AI was currently dominated by questions of regulation rather than innovation, and that many students were already far ahead of some staff and existing policies in their use of AI. This reinforced the importance of co-creation with students and the need for institutional approaches to keep pace with rapidly evolving practice.
 - b. Globally, there was significant variation in confidence and capability in using AI, with some already highly proficient while others were still on the learning curve. The vision was to use AI for co-creation, but there were cultural tensions, including that many senior leaders were less familiar with how to use AI in this way than younger users.
 - c. AI had considerable potential to support different learning styles and improve accessibility, including helping to remove barriers for some disabled students, and it was noted that it was already widely used by students in their learning. However, it was recognised that some students would need to unlearn poor AI habits and develop a better understanding of data sources and bias.
 - d. The transition between university and the workplace was becoming more challenging, with entry-level roles being particularly affected by AI. Employers were increasingly seeking graduates who could communicate and make judgements on AI-generated outputs. It was noted that it would be important to engage with employers to understand the skills they now expected and to consider whether education was transforming sufficiently to support graduates for the labour market and equip them to be leaders in this rapidly changing context.
 - e. Ensuring assessment integrity was also an immediate priority, given the practical challenge of verifying that work submitted over the next 12–18 months could confidently be confirmed as the student's own in a fast-moving AI environment.
 - f. While protecting information and controlling data inputs into AI systems was important, there was a risk that excessive restriction could limit Imperial's visibility in AI-driven analyses used by major research funders to assess competitiveness, activity peaks and emerging strengths across the sector. It was important to balance the protection of data with appropriate external visibility to ensure that the University's data were included in these datasets and that Imperial did not appear less competitive than it was in reality.
 - g. In-person communication skills would remain important; while AI-generated applications were increasingly bringing candidates to interview, some then found it more difficult to perform in person. Although many tasks were becoming automated, a number of disciplines

taught at Imperial, such as surgery, were likely to continue to depend on hands-on, in-person ability, and human qualities of communication, connectivity and social ability would remain important differentiators in the labour market.

- h. AI would also support the wider digital transformation, particularly through the Great Service programmes for staff and students. It was noted that it is often harder to adapt an established organisation to new ways of working than to design one from scratch, reinforcing the need to be clear about prioritisation, the minimum expectations for staff competence, and the roadmap for developing the skills required for an AI-enabled organisation.
 - i. The ambition of the AI literacy pillar was considered not sufficiently bold, as the aim should be to develop graduates who would be future leaders in this technology for their peers. It was also suggested that, given the rapid pace of change, both students and staff would need access to appropriate tools and support from “super-users,” with a focus on understanding which jobs and tasks would be most affected by AI and identifying those roles likely to change first and fastest.
8. Imperial’s longer-term positioning in an AI-enabled higher education landscape was discussed, with an emphasis on building on the University’s strong reputation in science and technology to develop graduates who are not only AI-literate but confident leaders in its use. It was noted that new AI-enabled competitors, including large technology companies offering targeted qualifications, may emerge, making it increasingly important to articulate the distinctive value of an Imperial education, including its deep scientific foundations, the ability to generate new knowledge, and the strength of its research environment, community and connection with world-leading scientists. Human qualities such as communication, connectivity and social ability were seen as continuing to differentiate Imperial graduates, and it was observed that this was a story the University had not always articulated strongly. There was endorsement for the direction of work and encouragement to go further, drawing on insights from departmental industrial advisory boards and the value of co-creation in bringing together a range of skills and perspectives.

Strategy implementation update

9. The Vice-President (Communications and Strategic Engagement) updated Council on progress over the past year and a half across the strategic initiatives stemming from the Science for Humanity strategy (Paper 5). The programme was transitioning into Phase 2 with an increased focus on monitoring and measurement. The portfolio had expanded to eleven pillars, now including the Campaign, and clearer lines of accountability had been established through the Strategic Management Office (SMO), creating a new cohort of professional and academic leaders across the institution. Early assumptions that initiatives would progress autonomously had proved unrealistic, which led to the introduction of additional central resources and more

structured programme oversight. Most initiatives had now moved, or were ready to move, into Phase 2 with business cases progressing through UMB. Several initiatives such as WestTech London, Imperial Global, Class of 2030, Sustainability and the ECR Institute were progressing well, while others required adjustment in response to the rapidly changing external environment. Some areas, including the School of Convergence Science, Imperial Lifelong Learning, Science Capital, Inspires Scholarships, and the Centre for Societal Engagement, were progressing more slowly, which was considered appropriate in certain cases.

Opportunities were emerging quickly in areas such as UKRI funding and industry partnerships, and the venture fund was highlighted as having the potential to be transformational for the innovation pipeline and wider ecosystem.

10. Engagement with the School of Convergence Science had been strong, and progress had accelerated over the past six months following a simplification of the structure from four schools to a single school, which had created a clearer mission focus and reduced the emphasis on building infrastructure. An operations team had now been established, making it easier for the Academic Co-Directors to engage with partners and external communities. A workshop with UMB, faculty leadership teams and the School had helped define the missions and key milestones, enabling these to be tested with academic leaders and refined through feedback. These interventions over the past three months were beginning to show impact, although there was still significant work to do.
11. Progress on the Science Capital initiative was noted to be positive, but it was highlighted that public communication remained limited until cornerstone investment was secured.
12. The Centre for Societal Engagement aimed to allow existing activity to grow in scale and profile and to become a formal Centre of Excellence. Work remained in Phase 1 and was focused on refining the value proposition and planning the transition from the existing team to the Centre. This was considered appropriate, as the ability to deliver societal engagement activity was not being affected by the design and planning work.
13. Imperial Lifelong Learning would launch shortly, with substantial preparatory work undertaken to ensure it would be able to progress at pace once established. Further updates on both Lifelong Learning and the Scholarships workstream would be provided in the next six months.
14. The development of the KPI framework had not been straightforward, with some initial resistance and extensive debate regarding the purpose of the KPIs and the aspects of performance they should measure. Three levels of KPIs had been established to assess the strategic programme, the impact of individual initiatives and operational delivery. The process had ultimately been productive, and colleagues recognised the value and purpose of the framework. The strategic programme KPIs would be reported to Council annually. Examples of emerging KPIs were presented, and it was noted that although progress was not always solely attributable to the strategic initiatives, the KPIs nevertheless provided an important mechanism for effective oversight.

15. The fundraising campaign had been integrated into the strategic programme, enabling those teams to draw on central expertise for planning, risk identification and mitigation, and ensuring strong coordination with the strategy. It was noted that many new colleagues had joined the campaign team, and that access to institutional knowledge and support would help accelerate their readiness to deliver the campaign. Consideration was also being given to a brand-led approach alongside fundraising, recognising that branding activity could strengthen external engagement and broaden the range of stakeholders reached. The discussion touched on emerging themes such as defence and security, which would connect with multiple parts of the University, and on the wider Research Initiatives Programme, including opportunities associated with new roles and increasing organisational capacity to manage a growing volume of grants, partnerships and collaborations.
16. In addition to the strategic initiatives, a Foresight Programme had been introduced in the Faculty of Medicine to examine where the Faculty's strategy intersected with the University's and the opportunities this created. Led by the Provost and the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and supported by the SMO, the programme was assessing the Faculty's strengths across education, research, enterprise and philanthropy, reviewing its talent pipeline and reputation, and identifying opportunities to increase income through enhanced innovation and entrepreneurship. A report would be brought forward in due course.
17. The key discussion points were:
 - a. That the strategy relied heavily on academic income growth and philanthropy, which underscored the importance of reviewing downside scenarios and identifying elements of the strategy that were non-negotiable.
 - b. That there were significant challenges in establishing the School of Convergence Science at the pace originally envisaged. Concerns were raised that aspects of the current structure might be acting as barriers, and that progress could be accelerated by balancing top-down direction with stronger bottom-up academic leadership and by drawing on existing convergence-related activity across faculties.
 - c. That it would be important to clarify the distinctive role of the School so that it complements, rather than competes with, existing activity. There was some urgency to position the School effectively to secure emerging UKRI funding opportunities and to be able to respond at pace as external funding streams developed.
 - d. That while there were clear opportunities for growth in research, further expansion would require cross-subsidy from other income sources, making it essential to maintain the right financial balance in a challenging external environment.
 - e. That the SMO continued to undertake consultation work to understand how the strategy was being received by staff and students and how it was influencing ways of working and progress. A programme of internal engagement was due to be launched to assess the

extent to which staff and students felt connected to the strategy, understood how they could contribute, and to identify further opportunities for involvement.

- f. That further work arising from the Foresight exercise included consideration of how to rebalance activity across the University, including through the potential introduction of additional undergraduate programmes, increased charitable funding of research, and enhanced opportunities for philanthropy. This work would be developed with each of the Faculties as part of the ongoing Foresight programme.
- g. That management considered the number of strategic initiatives and the associated demands to be manageable at present, although close to the limits of organisational capacity. In this context, questions were raised about whether the University was scaling quickly enough in areas such as convergence science, AI and sustainability, and whether sufficient managed risks were being taken, reinforcing the need for careful prioritisation and strengthened forward planning.

Governance updates

- 18. The Chair welcomed the new Chief Financial Officer, Ms. A. Caffyn to the meeting and invited her to introduce herself and share her early reflections. She highlighted that work was needed to further strengthen the Finance function, including building team capacity, reducing key-person risk and establishing more predictable processes and operating parameters. She was developing a business plan in collaboration with colleagues across the University and would in due course bring forward proposals to UMB and the Finance Committee.
- 19. The Registrar and University Secretary introduced the governance update (Paper 6), noting that this was an area of increasing scrutiny across the higher education sector and that it was important for Council to remain sighted on emerging expectations and risks. These matters had been discussed previously by the Audit and Risk Committee in November, and UMB had also been engaged, but the intention was to ensure that the wider Council had full visibility given the sector-wide significance.
- 20. An initial assessment had been undertaken against the Gillies Report, commissioned by the Scottish Funding Council following the rapid deterioration of governance and finance at the University of Dundee. This assessment indicated that Imperial had strong assurance in many areas, while also identifying aspects where greater rigour would be beneficial. Work was also underway to review Imperial's position against the updated CUC Code, with the final version expected in April. Earlier work undertaken by Council, including the Halpin and Hall reviews had helped position the University well for these new expectations.
- 21. Related governance activity included improvements to management information, not due to concerns about accuracy, but to strengthen the breadth of metrics available for assurance and timely intervention, as well as enhanced action-tracking processes between committees, particularly Finance and Property. The cultural dimensions of governance were also emphasised,

with Audit and Risk Committee seeking further assurance around whistleblowing, grievance and compliance processes. It was noted that when the major sector guidance was published in April, it would represent an important moment for higher education as a whole.

Regular reports

22. The Chair provided a verbal report. He reported that, since the last meeting, he had continued to meet regularly with members of management and could say with confidence that there had been significant strengthening across the key functions supporting delivery of the strategy. He had attended both the Finance and Property Committees, noting their close engagement with the ambitions of the Academic Building programme and beyond, supported by effective collaboration across the Executive team and rigorous, coordinated decision-making. He had also met with the consuls and ICU, reporting that feedback on the current culture and atmosphere had been generally positive, while recognising that there was always more to do.
23. The Chair noted ongoing engagement with Government officials on matters including the international student levy and highlighted the strategic importance of forthcoming UKRI Tier 2 funding opportunities. He also reflected on recent external engagement activity, including a visit to Delhi where he and senior colleagues had met a wide range of current and prospective donors, partners and collaborators. He emphasised the continuing opportunity to build on these relationships and to expand collective networks for the benefit of the University, and thanked members who were supporting this work.
24. The President presented his report (Paper 7.2). He provided strategic context as a bridge between the AI and strategy discussion items and the Campaign, which would be the focus of discussions in the afternoon. The strategy set out both Imperial's strengths and its distinctiveness, with its STEMB focus and strong emphasis on translation and impact, and that the strategic initiatives provided concrete mechanisms for delivering on the University's potential to make the world healthier, smarter, safer and more sustainable. Through the strategy process, it had also become clear that Imperial was relatively small compared with other globally leading research-intensive universities, which created challenges in scaling activity to match its ambitions for global impact. Government expectations for Imperial to contribute more directly to economic growth, and increasingly to defence and security, had risen since the strategy was launched, and these areas were becoming significant national priorities in which the University would be expected to play a role. The President also highlighted that:
 - a. The pace of change was unprecedented, coupled with the challenge of balancing top-down strategic direction with bottom-up academic leadership. Progress in areas such as convergence science illustrated the complexity of achieving this balance, although Imperial's collegiality and track record positioned it well to respond quickly.
 - b. It was important to continue to assure colleagues that continued investment in core

disciplines would remain essential, alongside sustained support for cross-faculty initiatives from seed funding through to the School of Convergence Science.

- c. International partnerships were increasingly important for supporting student recruitment, diversifying markets and enabling research and innovation at scale. Examples such as Global Singapore and WestTech London were strengthening Imperial's global profile and contributing to the Campaign. He emphasised the need for a coordinated institutional approach that enabled academics to build effective collaborations, including through bilateral relationships with universities and major corporate partners.
- d. Defence and security research was growing in importance, noting recent work related to Horizon Europe and wider European defence-related funding, and the opportunities this could create given that many European universities were constrained by civil-clause restrictions. He emphasised the potential scale of future European programmes, including FP10, and the need to ensure Imperial was positioned to contribute fully, which would require further internal work on policy, facilities and staff engagement, recognising that not all colleagues would be comfortable with this direction.
- e. The UKRI review was continuing, and as the UK's largest research funder its spending review was shifting priorities towards discovery research, societal and economic challenges, and support for innovative companies to scale, with several programmes paused while the review took place. A new model was expected to be implemented at the start of the next financial year, and Imperial, alongside the Russell Group, was engaging closely with UKRI's leadership to help shape the evolving funding landscape.
- f. That recent work within UMB included mapping strengths to strategic priorities, developing campaign messaging, and progressing the Academic Building and wider capital plan. Academic visions for the new building were becoming more compelling as work continued with the Deans, and discussions were underway regarding the longer-term future of real estate at White City and South Kensington. Treasury and financing considerations, including the future of the Victoria Industrial Estate proposition, remained an important part of UMB's work.

25. In discussion, it was noted that the external policy environment remained uncertain, particularly in relation to international students, and that this created challenges for long-term planning. The greatest risk would be the imposition of a cap on international student numbers in any category, and considerable effort had been directed at protecting the institution from potential adverse policy impacts. It was acknowledged that financial targets could not be achieved without growth in international student numbers, which meant that diversification of international recruitment markets remained essential. It was confirmed that Imperial had a clear policy not to pursue overseas campuses, given the limited success of such models elsewhere and the difficulty of delivering an equivalent student experience, with the only potential exceptions being in CPD and executive education.

26. The Provost and Deputy President presented his report (Paper 7.3). He noted that the highlights included in the paper were a deliberately curated selection intended to give Council a sense of the breadth and scale of progress and emphasised that the wider community was delivering success across multiple areas.
27. The Chief Operating Officer presented his report (Paper 7.4). He highlighted that there had been ongoing funding challenges in relation to high-performance computing, with further national announcements expected, and explained that work had been underway to ensure that Imperial's strategy and sourcing approach would secure the capacity needed to support future academic activity. Cyber security had been elevated as a priority in recent months, and the rollout of passkeys had begun, with students prioritised as an area of particular vulnerability. The new Security Operations Centre had also proved valuable in identifying issues requiring further investigation.
28. He reported that financial performance had remained on plan and was considered strong in the current environment, although underlying cash movements reflected the timing of property disposals and the decision not to take on additional debt in relation to the Victoria Industrial Estate purchase. Work was also underway to determine the cost of the carbon-neutrality measures required for the coming year to support progress towards the 2029 target. The paper also provided an update on the innovation partnership on DZ3 North, noting that due to the challenging financial environment in London, the facility would not proceed.
29. The President of ICU presented his report (Paper 7.5). Block grant negotiations were underway between ICU and the University, with the ICU requesting a 9% increase and seeking a two-year agreement to maintain core services and support the growth of the wider student population. He raised concerns regarding decision-making on changes of use to shared spaces, with a request for clearer consultation processes to ensure that students were engaged in advance when financial decisions affected facilities such as the chaplaincy. Work was also underway with the People team to address issues affecting Graduate Teaching Assistants, with a particular focus on providing guaranteed hours and greater stability for PGR students undertaking GTA duties in light of changes arising from the Employment Rights Act 2025. The position on London weighting for PGR students formed part of continued engagement with the London Russell Group and UKRI, including work to assess the impact of the 2025 8% stipend increase and regional variations on talent attraction and competitiveness.
30. The Provost and Deputy President presented the report from Senate (Paper 7.6). At its December meeting, Senate had received confirmation that Imperial exceeded the thresholds for the OfS registration Condition B3 concerning student outcomes. It was noted that Imperial continued to award a high proportion of First-Class degrees and that the approach taken in determining degree classifications had been consistently upheld by external examiners. Senate had also received a strategy briefing on lifelong learning, outlining a vision to position Imperial as a global destination for science-led, future-focused lifelong learning.

Committee reports

31. The Chair of Finance Committee presented his report (Paper 8.1). Property Committee members had joined the February meeting for discussion of the Academic Building, and the meeting had concluded that the institution remained on track to bring forward a recommendation for approval at the next Council meeting, and that the proposed financing approach was sound. The Committee had requested several documents for consideration at the next meeting, including a single consolidated financial plan owned by the President and UMB, and clarity on the arrangements for managing the construction programme, with defined accountability and visibility of risk. The Academic Building remained the priority within the capital plan, though accommodation requirements were identified as a related risk, and assurance would be needed on how additional beds over the next decade would be funded. The use of cash held on the balance sheet was supported, subject to appropriate longer-term bank backstops, and the need to strengthen forward-looking treasury policies was noted. It was also confirmed that overall financing would depend in part on philanthropy, and that contingency planning would be required as the wider plan developed.
32. Mr. J. Seppala presented the Property Committee report (Paper 8.2). In addition to the Academic Building, the Committee had discussed the residential component of the capital plan in the context of future growth. It was noted that monetisation options would take time in the current market, as pricing across the UK student-housing sector remained under significant pressure and liquidity was likely to be constrained for some time. While Imperial's residential assets were appropriate for current student provision, they were not necessarily positioned for near-term transactions. Alongside broader capital requirements, members stressed the importance of keeping the long-term vision in mind, as future development would be highly capital-intensive. Work was underway to assess the overall scale of capital need, including a forthcoming cluster survey expected within the next six months, which would inform a forward plan and enable prioritisation.
33. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee provided an oral update on the tender process to appoint a fully outsourced internal audit provider, which had been initiated because KPMG, the incumbent, was due to complete its contract at the end of the summer and had been in place for twelve years. Five firms had initially expressed interest and, following evaluation against the agreed matrix, a shortlist would be selected. Final bids were due the following week, after which a panel comprising Executive members and Committee members would meet on 11 March. A recommendation would be presented to the April Committee meeting, with Council to consider the outcome in May.
34. The Chair provided an update from Nominations Committee (Paper 8.4). He presented the recommendations for the appointment of members of the Endowment Board and outlined the process for the renewal of the President's term of office. It was noted that the latter item was

not intended for discussion at this meeting; members would have the opportunity to provide views to the Search Committee. He also reported that, with the agreement of the Committee, he had taken Chair's action to update the Nominations Committee terms of reference to include the reappointment of members, as well as their appointment, in order to reflect established practice.

Resolved:

- a. That Ms Annabel Downs be appointed as an External Member of the Endowment Board, for a first term of office commencing 1 March 2026 to 28 February 2030;
- b. That Ms Lisha Patel be appointed as an External Member of the Endowment Board, for a single term of office from 1 March 2026 to 28 February 2030; and
- c. That Vindi Banga, Katherine Coates and Deepak Khanna be appointed as members of the Search Committee established to consider the renewal of the President's term of office, and that the Search Committee's terms of reference be approved.

Starred items

35. The Chair confirmed that there had been no other requests to discuss the starred items, and Council noted the Sustainability Strategy (Paper 9).

36. Council received the updated Research Misconduct Policy and Procedures (Paper 10.1).

Resolved: That the revised Research Misconduct Policy and Procedures be approved as a Regulation of Council (Regulation 21), with immediate effect.

Any other business

37. There were no items of any other business.

The meeting closed at 12.05.